

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM CONFERENCE CALL NOTES

May 15, 2002

**CORPS OF ENGINEERS NORTHWESTERN DIVISION OFFICES – CUSTOM HOUSE
PORTLAND, OREGON**

TMT Internet Homepage: <http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/TMT/index.html>

DRAFT

FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS

Facilitator: Donna Silverberg

The following notes are a summary of issues that are intended to point out future actions or issues that may need further discussion at upcoming meetings. These notes are not intended to be the “record” of the meeting, only a reminder for TMT members.

Grand Coulee Operation:

TMT had a conference call Monday, May 13 to discuss operations at Grand Coulee. After discussions, the Salmon Managers met the following day to develop an SOR for TMT to consider at today's meeting. Ron Boyce summarized SOR 2002-3, which requests Grand Coulee, Brownlee and Lower Granite operations to meet minimum flow targets at McNary for the spring migration of chinook and steelhead which is currently underway.

In response to the request, Tony Norris said the BOR will draft Grand Coulee to as low as 1237' in order to meet a weekly average flow target of 220 kcfs at McNary while maintaining flows of 135 kcfs at Priest Rapids. This operation will be effective through May 24; TMT will check in at their May 22 meeting. The BOR acknowledged that the Colville and Spokane Tribes are not supportive of drafting Grand Coulee below 1240' and the BOR will make every effort to minimize the draft during this operation. The BOR and BPA will coordinate with the Tribes on cultural resource survey work being done at the reservoir.

After a caucus, the Salmon Managers expressed appreciation for the compromise and asked that 220 kcfs not be the average but rather the minimum flow at McNary.

Action: If a freshet occurs, the BOR will fill Grand Coulee up to 1240' and then pass inflow to help meet this request.

TMT will continue to monitor operations and will revisit the issue next week.

Dworshak:

The Salmon Managers also requested that there be a delay in dropping Dworshak to minimum outflows in order to provide flow now for migrating fish. CRITFC is concerned with refilling Dworshak in June and supports refill over spring flow operations. Kyle Martin asked TMT to be mindful of this desire and to be conservative with Dworshak outflows.

Action: After reviewing the SSARR runs, TMT agreed to drop Dworshak from 14 kcfs to 10 kcfs this evening and track the Dworshak operation closely to be mindful of refill targets. CRITFC expressed concern with this. TMT will reassess the operation at next week's May 22 meeting. If an error has occurred in the model runs, a TMT emergency call will be convened.

SOR 2002-2:

The Salmon Managers requested that Biological Opinion spill levels be maintained and that protocols for power emergency situations be followed. This request is a result of a power emergency that occurred last week in which TMT was not notified when BPA shut off spill for one hour. Scott Bettin sent power emergency actions to FPAC and asked them to prioritize the list and discuss other actions to take if a power emergency occurs. He will continue to keep Salmon Managers in the loop.

Action: TMT will discuss the prioritization list at the next TMT meeting.

SOR 2002 C-7:

Kyle Martin presented a request from the lower river Tribes to operate Bonneville pools within one foot of full for a tribal commercial fishery. The COE will operate the pool at 75'-76.5'.

Other:

Paul Wagner of NMFS acknowledged that Grant County operators did an excellent job of maintaining steady flows at Priest Rapids throughout the week and weekend and expressed appreciation for their efforts.

The next TMT meeting will be May 22 at 9 am. An agenda will be posted on the website.

Meeting Minutes

1. Greeting and Introductions

The May 15 Technical Management Team conference call to discuss Grand Coulee operations was chaired by Rudd Turner of the Corps and facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The following is a distillation, not a verbatim transcript, of items discussed at the meeting and actions taken. Anyone with questions or comments about these minutes should call Turner at 503/808-3935.

2. Grand Coulee Operation/Dworshak Operation.

On May 14, the action agencies received SOR 2002-3. This SOR, supported by ODFW,

USFWS, CRITFC, WDFW, IDFG and NMFS, requests the following specific operations:

- Provide at least the minimum juvenile fish migration flows specified in the NMFS 2000 Biological Opinion at McNary and Lower Granite Dams, utilizing Grand Coulee, Dworshak and Brownlee operations. Meet Biological Opinion flow objectives through drafting of Grand Coulee reservoir and utilizing the options of reshaping outflows from other storage reservoirs to provide higher flows at Lower Granite and McNary Dams.

Ron Boyce spent a few minutes going through the specifications of and justification for this SOR, the full text of which is available via the TMT's Internet homepage. Please refer to this document for full details.

Boyce noted that mainstem flows are falling, at a time when the juvenile outmigration is peaking. As a result, he said, we're seeing passage indices at the mainstem projects that are only about half of what we would expect to see this week. That means significant delay and the potential for serious biological consequences for all of our juvenile outmigrants, said Boyce.

In response to a question from Scott Bettin, Boyce said the BiOp flow target at McNary is 246 Kcfs; at Priest Rapids, 135 Kcfs. Paul Wagner said NMFS' understanding is that the SOR request is that the action agencies meet the minimum BiOp flow range of 220 Kcfs at McNary; Shane Scott said that is Washington's understanding as well.

Rudd Turner noted that passage indices have actually held fairly steady in the average range this week; they have not shown a significant decline. Are we really seeing a biological impact from the current flow situation? he asked. Boyce replied that indices should be sharply increasing at this point, not holding steady; in addition, the Snake River outmigrants that have been sampled are in very poor condition for this time of year.

So 220 Kcfs is your target at McNary? Bettin asked. At minimum, Boyce replied.

Tony Norris said Reclamation is willing to provide some additional water from Grand Coulee, and plans to operate the project to produce a week-average flow of 220 Kcfs at McNary between now and May 24. If natural flows don't start to pick up, and it is necessary to draft Grand Coulee to maintain that flow, we will go no lower than elevation 1237, unless a deeper draft is required to maintain the 135 Kcfs week-average flow at Priest Rapids, Norris said, adding that the current elevation at Grand Coulee is 1241.5. That's a potential 4.5 feet of additional draft? Wagner asked. That's correct, said Norris, although we would prefer to draft less if possible. Based on our analysis, said Norris, we should be able to maintain 220 Kcfs at McNary at least through May 24, even with 1237 feet as the floor.

What is the 1237 draft limit based on? Boyce asked. That's as far as we're willing to compromise, Norris said – after the 24th, we'll talk again, if the freshet still has not begun. In response to a question from Kyle Martin, Norris said he had spoken to Keith Underwood about this operation; the Spokane Tribe is not happy with this compromise, and do not want Grand Coulee drafted below 1240 feet. Craig Sprankle said he had spoken to a representative from the Colville Tribe, and the Colvilles, too, are extremely unhappy about this operation. Will you be

modifying your contract with the tribes to make more funding available for surveys and patrols? Boyce asked. There isn't time to modify the contracts, Norris replied; in addition, it's doubtful the tribes have the manpower available to do the additional surveys over the next two weeks. Actually, said Chris Ross, I spoke to the tribes and they said they do have the manpower available. Norris said this issue will be coordinated between BPA, Reclamation and the tribes.

It sounds, then, as though there is no need to get the IT on the phone, Silverberg said -- the action agencies are willing to maintain a week-average flow of 220 Kcfs at McNary through next week. Let's just talk it through first, said Boyce -- the action agencies are willing to provide 220 Kcfs on a week-average basis through May 24, with the caveat that you will draft Grand Coulee no lower than 1237 feet by that date, unless a deeper draft is necessary to maintain the 135 Kcfs Priest Rapids week-average target. Boyce noted that 220 Kcfs is the bare-bones minimum flow at McNary for this time of year; if flows begin to pick up, will you continue to draft Grand Coulee to elevation 1237, providing flows closer to the 246 Kcfs target? he asked. No, Norris replied; again, we're willing to meet the 220 Kcfs, and if we can do so without drafting Grand Coulee all the way to elevation 1237, that would be our preference.

The group discussed whether or not an IT conference call is necessary; Boyce said that, in his view, that would be useful, but Norris replied that this decision has already been coordinated at the top echelon of the Bureau, and Reclamation is not going to change its mind. Essentially, he said, this is what we plan on doing. He added that, given the current weather forecast, he would not be in a big hurry to blow through the available volume at Grand Coulee; it doesn't look as though the freshet will be starting anytime soon, he said.

At this point, Boyce requested a caucus break to discuss the 220 Kcfs flow cap at McNary with the other salmon managers. When the meeting resumed, Boyce said the salmon managers accept Reclamation's proposal; while we're appreciative of the Bureau's willingness to compromise, said Boyce, we ask that you view the 220 Kcfs flow at McNary as a minimum flow, not a maximum. Norris replied that if the freshet begins, Grand Coulee will refill to elevation 1240, then pass inflow. Basically, if flows come up, we want the fish to enjoy the benefit from it, said Steve Pettit. Again, we won't fill Grand Coulee past elevation 1240, Norris replied. We can revisit the operation next Wednesday, said Bettin. It was so agreed. Again, said Boyce, the salmon managers appreciate the Bureau's willingness to compromise on this issue.

At Kyle Martin's request, the group next discussed Dworshak operations; Boyce noted that SOR 2002-3 also requests that the transition to minimum outflow at Dworshak be delayed. Based on the flow forecast information furnished today, it appears that the action agencies would prefer to go to minimum outflow at Dworshak as soon as possible. Why the change? Boyce asked. Turner went through the reasoning that went into the Dworshak numbers in the most recent SSARR run; he agreed that the action agencies see a need to reduce Dworshak outflow to 5.8 Kcfs this Friday, hold that outflow for a week, then reduce Dworshak outflow to minimum on Friday, May 24. Martin noted that there is a discrepancy between the current SSARR and the current water supply forecast. Hlebechuk replied that the Corps has been discussing that issue with the River Forecast Center; the feeling is that the current SSARR underpredicts the runoff volume at Dworshak. Martin said CRITFC is concerned that, given the uncertainty in the current forecasts, Dworshak will not refill by June 30 unless outflow is curtailed as soon as possible.

Turner noted that different forecast models operate on different assumptions; they are not absolute predictors, but tools on which to base best-judgement decisions. We just want to be sure Dworshak is operating in a conservative manner, so that the project does refill on June 30, Martin said. The Corps is comfortable with the planned operation, said Turner; we will continue to monitor the Dworshak operation and the forecasts closely, and can discuss it further next week.

Sharon Kiefer asked whether it would be possible to continue to release 10 Kcfs from Dworshak through next Wednesday, when the TMT meets again. That will be too late, Bettin replied – if one of the forecasts is correct, we will miss refill at Dworshak on June 30. This is absolutely the wrong time to be reducing flow in the Snake, said Boyce; to me, it makes more sense to maintain higher outflow now, even if that creates a slightly larger hole in Dworshak and delays refill by a few days. Pettit said IDFG agrees with Oregon's assessment; the flow situation is already abysmal in the Snake, he said, and if flows go down another 10 Kcfs, a large portion of the 2002 outmigration are not going to make it. We're already seeing a high percentage of fish at the Snake River trap that are fungused up, Pettit said; that situation is only going to get worse as May continues.

Turner replied that the Corps sees Dworshak refill as a very high priority under the action agencies' Biological Opinion responsibilities. The discussion returned to the discrepancies in the current and recent forecasts for Dworshak; Chris Ross observed that, in the information distributed at last week's TMT meeting, at 70% confidence of refill, based on the May final water supply forecast, there should have been 472 KAF available for flow augmentation this spring from Dworshak, which translates into nearly 10 Kcfs over the next 10 days. Hlebechuk replied that there are now only 278 KAF available, because the project has been releasing 14 Kcfs over the past 10 days. Right, said Ross – that translates into 10 Kcfs over the next 10 days, if we're willing to accept a 70% confidence of refill.

Kiefer added that, according to her information, Hells Canyon will be cutting back to 6.5 Kcfs beginning May 16. However, Brownlee is only eight feet from full, Kiefer said, so if the freshet begins soon, Brownlee inflow will have to pick up again.

The discussion proceeded in this vein for some minutes. Ultimately, it was agreed that Dworshak will go to 10 Kcfs, beginning as soon as possible, and will hold that discharge level at least through next Wednesday, May 22. Martin said CRITFC stands alone in advocating an operation that would reduce Dworshak outflow to minimum as soon as possible, to ensure Dworshak refill by June 30. The Corps agrees on the refill priority, said Turner; that's why we put the 6 Kcfs on the table. Wagner said NMFS is comfortable with maintaining 10 Kcfs outflow from Dworshak, at least until next Wednesday's TMT meeting. Scott said Washington agrees with that operation; Pettit said Idaho does as well. Martin reiterated that CRITFC opposes this operation; we'll just track what happens to see who turns out to be right, he said. So agreed, then, said Silverberg; we'll go with 10 Kcfs outflow from Dworshak, at least through next Wednesday. We'll go to 10 Kcfs outflow from Dworshak beginning tonight, said Hlebechuk. If we feel a change in this operation is needed sooner, said Turner, we'll convene an emergency call.

Boyce said the SOR also requests that Brownlee pass inflow until the freshet begins; in the absence of an Idaho Power representative, however, it is difficult to have a meaningful dialogue on this issue, he said.

On May 14, the action agencies also received SOR 2002-3. This SOR, supported by ODFW, USFWS, CRITFC, WDFW, IDFG and NMFS, requests the following specific operations:

- Implement the 2000 NMFS Biological Opinion spill levels
- Follow the existing protocol to be used during a NW or SW reliability event

Boyce spent a few minutes going through the specifications of and justification for this SOR, the full text of which is available via the TMT's Internet homepage. Please refer to this document for full details.

Boyce noted that Bonneville declared a power emergency earlier this week, briefly interrupting spill; we were concerned for two reasons, he said: we were unclear about the need for this operation, and Bonneville did not convene a TMT conference call to discuss it. We need a better set of guidelines that will allow us to discuss the need for the power system emergency, as well as potential alternative operations that will not impact operations for fish, he said. Bettin replied that there are seven or eight alternatives on the emergency protocols list before curtailing spill; in this particular instance, BPA was able to buy enough energy to cover its obligations during the hour-long emergency.

Again, said Boyce, I think it would be useful to have some further discussion about emergency notification procedures. If these situations do arise again, he said, please keep us in the loop. Will do, said Bettin; between now and next meeting, if you could look over the current emergency procedures list and come prepared to discuss any changes you would like to see, that would be very helpful.

On May 15, CRITFC submitted SOR 2002 C-7. This SOR requests the following specific operations:

- Implement the following hydrosystem operations during the ceremonial and subsistence and commercial Treaty fishery times as established by the tribes and the Columbia River Compact, for the period 6 a.m. May 17-6 p.m. May 18:
- Bonneville Pool: operate the pool within 1 foot from full pool (msl elevation 77-76)
- The Dalles Pool: operate the pool within 1 foot (msl elevation 159.5-158.5)
- John Day pool: operate the pool within 1 foot (msl elevation 264.5-263.5)

Martin went through the specifications of this SOR, the full text of which is available via the TMT homepage. Please refer to this document for further details. After a brief discussion, Turner said that, as per the Corps' usual policy, they will maintain a 1.5-foot operating range, 75 – 76.5 feet, in Bonneville pool for the duration of the fishery.

With that, the conference call was adjourned. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff

Kuechle, BPA contractor.

BPA ATTENDANCE LIST

MAY 15, 2002

Name	Affiliation
Colin Beam	PPM
Scott Bettin	BPA
Ron Boyce	ODFW
Scott Boyd	COE
Suzanne Cooper	BPA
Scott Corwin	PNGC Power
Russ George	Water Management Consultants Inc.
Robin Harkless	Facilitation Team
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE
Sharon Kiefer	IDFG
Tony Norris	Reclamation
Steve Pettit	IDFG
Shane Scott	WDFW
Donna Silverberg	Facilitation Team
Craig Sprankle	Reclamation
Glen Traeger	Avista Energy
Rudd Turner	COE
Paul Wagner	NMFS